‘Milford Sound’ by Peta Freestone

## This is a ghost story set in colonial New Zealand. As such, it is a text which depicts another culture—similar to, but different from, our own. We’re going to look at its ‘spooky qualities’, but we’re also going to examine the way it represents a place and culture through language.

# Pre-reading and reading activities

1. As a class or in small groups discuss the following questions:

* What language is spoken in New Zealand?
* Why?

1. Watch the following 5:30 minute video from Jacplus *English Is… Year 8:* <http://www.jacplus.com.au/secure/Searchlight?searchbox=eles-1583> and complete the **Language Evolution** worksheet that goes with it.
2. Look at this table of non-English and older English words that that we will encounter in this story. As we read you will be asked to fill in meanings. Discuss whether you can guess at any of them before we start.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Non-English and older English words** | **Meanings** |
| hearth |  |
| darning |  |
| whittling |  |
| Aye |  |
| Naught |  |
| wha ‘tis |  |
| pallet |  |
| frock coat |  |
| bowler and gold fob chain |  |
| Pah |  |
| *hei-matua* |  |
| *E hi noa ana, na te aroha* |  |
| physician |  |
| cool flannels, mustard compresses, broth |  |
| Poutini |  |
| Waitaiki |  |
| *pounamu* |  |
| swag |  |
| *tangiwai* |  |
| *kokopu* |  |
| heretic prattle |  |
| Te Anau |  |
| *piopio* |  |

1. This story is narrated in limited third person using past tense. ‘Limited’ means that we only get one character’s perspective (in this case Abigail’s); ‘third person’ means that the narrator does not take part in the story; ‘past tense’ means that the story is told after all the events in it have already happened.
2. Place. You have been told in the title that this story is set in Milford Sound, New Zealand. What kind of place is this? [Google an image](https://www.google.com.au/search?hl=en&site=imghp&tbm=isch&source=hp&biw=1536&bih=718&q=milford+sound&oq=milford+sound&gs_l=img.3..0l10.1011.3706.0.4869.13.9.0.2.2.0.526.1582.2-1j1j1j1.4.0.msedrc...0...1ac.1.58.img..7.6.1629.zBdYEqXNye4) and contribute to a class brainstorm of adjectives to describe this place. Add to this list as you read the story.

# Post-reading activities

1. Discuss and complete the following comprehension and inference questions in small groups:
   * Which words on p32 give us the impression that ‘the Sound’ might not be an ordinary body of water?
   * Who is Ikaw and where is he from? P33
   * What has Mr Kerr been taking from the Sound? P38
   * Why is he so angry when Abi tells him about ‘the gods’? p40
   * What happens to him? P42
   * What happens to Abi? P47
2. Culture. In different ways, both Abigail and Ikaw have had a very different lives from yours and have come from different cultures. In a small group, discuss how well the writer makes you feel empathy for each of these characters. Were you able to stand in their shoes?
3. Change. We know that this story is set in the early days of British settlement in New Zealand because Abigail is ‘one of the first northern children to be born on southern shores’ (p32). How has the coming of British settlers changed this place? Which elements of the story might be different if it was set in 2015?
4. The supernatural. In a small group, discuss which other aspects of nature might want to ‘take revenge’ on human kind. Brainstorm a list of animals, plants and minerals which have been damaged or threatened by people, then provide further details about what has happened to two of the most affected of these. What might happen if nature ‘took revenge’? Present a summary of your discussion and most interesting ideas to the class.
5. Language. How do you feel about reading non-English words in a text if it is set in another country or culture? Does it make reading difficult or interesting? Explain.
   * Focus on the punctuation in the following passage from p39 and discuss why the writer has used quotation marks, apostrophes, pairs of commas, a dash and a colon. Annotate these using the ‘review’ and ‘comment’ function in Word.

|  |
| --- |
| ‘Maybe in your father’s country,’ Ikaw retorted. ‘But in this land, it is my father’s gods who reign. That *pounamu*, the greenstone, can only be found at the Sound, nowhere else. Long ago, Poutini, the spirit guardian of the greenstone, fell in love with Waitaiki, a beautiful northern island woman. But she was already married, so Poutini kidnapped her and fled south, to where the Ocean meets the Sound. Waitaiki sat weeping atop the cliffs for years. Her tears fell into the water and made the greenstone. That’s why the *pounama* is almost blue there. We call it *tangiwai*—a sorrow that can never be healed.’ His expression was fierce. ‘Your father has brought the anger of the gods down on his family: first by stealing it and then by selling it.’ |

# Writing activities

1. Complete at least two of the following activities in your Writing Folio:
   * The orientation for a spooky story in which nature takes revenge on a group of people. Use page 31 as a model for three paragraphs: the first should describe the setting; the second should ‘zoom in’ on the main character; the third should ‘zoom in’ even further to describe what he or she is doing as the story opens.
   * The complication of a spooky story which reveals a supernatural element. Use page 32 as a model for a dialogue between two characters discussing recent occurrences. One believes these are supernatural and the other doesn’t.
   * An epilogue. With a partner, write down three different predictions about what Ikaw might do next. Think about his age and his situation. What are his options? How will he cope? Next, develop one of your predictions into another scene for the story. You and your partner might choose to work on your scene together, or you might each write separate versions and compare them afterwards.